A DISCOURSE,

&c. &c.

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED ON THE

FAST-DAY in FEBRUARY 1799,

IN THE

CHURCH OF ST. LAWRENCE,

WINCHESTER.

By the Rev. HENRY GABELL, A. B. *Rector*,

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THE following diſcourſe may be thought too political for the pulpit. I might urge, in my defence, that our political, form an important claſs of our moral, obligations; and that it is the office of a miniſter, to enforce the whole duty of man. I might alledge, that the occaſion of this particular diſcourſe was decidedly political. But the beſt apology is to be drawn from the peculiar circumſtances of the times. When political theories are recommended to the world, which involve the deſtruction of Chriſtianity, there ſeems to be no other effectual way of defending our religion againſt that particular mode of attack, than by expoſing the falſehood of ſuch theories; nor does that preacher exceed the bounds of his duty, who intrenches no farther upon politics, than is neceſſary for that purpoſe.

A DISCOURSE, &c.

PSALM II. Verſe 1.

Why do the people imagine a vain thing?

AMIDST all our political diſſentions, there is one truth, in which contending parties are unhappily agreed, that the preſent diſordered ſtate of public affairs juſtifies the moſt melancholy apprehenſions.

Nor does the proſpect brighten, when we look beyond our own ſhores, to the train of events that has been long paſſing on the theatre of Europe. Whichever way we turn our eyes, all is miſrule and uproar. The nations of the earth *rage furiouſly together; the people imagine a*

vain thing. The people are under an illuſion, the moſt deſtructive that ever ſeduced the mind of man, the fouleſt that ever was engendered among the corruptions of a ſinking ſtate. Not confined to the old European Governments, enfeebled with war and luxury, this fatal error ſeems to have traverſed the Atlantic, and to hang, like a peſtilential vapour, over the mountains and moraſſes of the other hemiſphere. There, and wherever elſe, *nearer home,* nations half reclaimed from barbariſm, have ſufficiently learned the rudiments of regular life, to concur with joint power towards one common end, we find the Demon of Revolution perverting the public mind. Who ſees not, that popular licentiouſneſs, and popular crime, and I might almoſt ſay, popular madneſs, have diſordered the frame of ſociety, and filled the earth with civil violence? It ſeems as if the fountains of all political evil were broken up. Nations deſolated, and kingdoms overthrown! Empire after empire, ſwallowed up and loſt, with all their laws, all their tribunals, all their inſtitutions, civil and religious! Since the irruption of the Northern Hordes, hiſtory records no era ſo generally calamitous.

Yet

Yet theſe are the effects * of neither hurricane, nor earthquake, nor any other great convulſion in the natural world. They are the fruits, whether of human folly, or of human wickedneſs, God only knows, moulded into ſyſtem, and called, by the madneſs of the hour, Philoſophy. Merciful Father! withdraw not, we beſeech thee, thy Providence from the adminiſtration of this world, nor abandon us, in thine anger, to the

* It tranſports us beyond the bounds of patience, to hear the champions of this philoſophy, while they admit in their candour that its principles have been miſapplied and abuſed, contend at the ſame time that we are not to argue from the abuſe, againſt the uſe, of them; that the preſent diſorders of Europe are tranſient, and will ſoon ſubſide into the moſt beautiful arrangements of ſocial life.

Whether theſe volcanic revolutions and earthquakes may clear the political ~~hemi~~atmoſphere for after-ages, and ultimately meliorate the condition of man, is known only to the Supreme Diſpoſer of events. There is, however, reaſon to fear, that in the mixed concerns of human life, the uſe and the abuſe of this philoſophy cannot be ſeparated; that it is, in a practical ſenſe, eſſentially wicked. Of this, however, I am ſure, that for any human being, entruſted with civil authority, to preſume in the drunkenneſs of a metaphyſical delirium, to truck and ſquander the happineſs of a whole generation, for what all allow to be a future, contingent, ſpeculative good, is the ſummit of human arrogance.

powers

powers of darkneſs, or the fiercer tyranny of human paſſions. The thought, if it were to faſten upon the mind, would make us deſperate. It never overſhadows the imagination, without raiſing ſuch terrors in the ſoul, as Religion alone can calm, by aſſuring us, that it is "Through God's high ſufferance for the trial of man," and through the myſterious workings of Divine Wiſdom, for his ultimate good, that theſe things are.

In the proſecution of this ſubject, I ſhall endeavour,

I. Firſt, to anſwer the queſtion, *Why* do the people imagine a vain thing?

II. Secondly, to ſhew that the thing which the people imagine, is really *vain;*

III. And I ſhall conclude with an addreſs to the hearts and conſciences of Engliſhmen.

I. Firſt, I am to anſwer the queſtion, Why do the people imagine a vain thing? or in other words, What are the cauſes which

which have occaſioned the riſe, and favoured the progreſs of the new philoſophy *?

Hiſtory will record, for the inſtruction of future ages, and the everlaſting diſgrace of the preſent, that Europe, at the cloſe of the eighteenth century, in all the pride and preſumption of ſuperior wiſdom, was betrayed into a philoſophy, the wildeſt and maddeſt, to ſay nothing of its wickedneſs, that ever impoſed on the credulity of the human underſtanding. It is now about forty years, ſince a cabal † of philoſophers, or to ſpeak more properly, a *ſect* of *philoſophizing Fanatics*, having contrived, by the witchcraft of their eloquence, and other far leſs honourable

* The prevalence of the new philoſophy, is conſidered by one of its *advocates*, as an argument for its truth. What? Is it come to this, that the teſt of truth is vulgar credulity? Not without reaſon, it ſeems, has the new ſchool of religion and politics been accuſed of railing againſt ſuperſtition in the ſpirit of monks.

† According to Fontenelle, twenty eminent philoſophers, acting in concert, need not deſpair of convincing all Europe, that the preſence of the ſun is not the cauſe of day-light. A feeble image this, of human credulity, compared with what the preſent age might have ſupplied, when a literary junto ſeems to have half-perſuaded Europe, that atheiſm is good for man.

artifices,

artifices, to poſſeſs themſelves of the public ear, and to point the paſſions and the enthuſiaſms of men to their ſecret views, promulgated to the world a new ſcheme of ſociety, upon new principles; principles, in the arrogant cant of their metaphyſics, excluſively liberal, enlightened, and benevolent.

To diſpel, by their radiance, the miſts of human errour; to ſoften, by their mildneſs, the ruggedneſs of our natures; to re-organize, by ſome wondrous, plaſtic power, the whole political and moral world; ſuch were the dreams of alchymiſtical ſtateſmen and philoſophers.

Yet no ſooner did their philoſophy begin to operate upon human life, than inſtead of diſpenſing health and cheerfulneſs, like the great luminary of heaven, it deluged Europe with blood; and ſtill threatens to depopulate the faireſt parts of the earth. It ſeems as if the machinations of theſe conſpirators were not to be fruſtrated by the wiſdom of human counſels. They have contrived an engine, more formidable than the cannon, for ſubjugating the *mind* of man. All the loweſt artifices of popular deluſion, they have digeſted

digeſted into ſyſtem; and found ſecurity for the eſtabliſhment of this intellectual tyranny, in all the corruptions, and ſometimes in the virtues, of our weak, fallen natures. "He "that goeth about to perſuade a multitude "that they are miſgoverned, ſhall never "want for favourable hearers *." This mixed multitude of mankind they have divided into claſſes, and appropriated to each its peculiar mode of ſeduction. The tacticks of the Rights of Man furniſh them with ſtratagems adapted to every age, temper, or condition. To the indigent, they promiſe plunder; to the ambitious, power; to the envious, the fall of greatneſs: honour, to the traitor; to the aſſaſſin, if the blood ſpilled be royal, immortal glory; to the wicked in general, releaſe from all moral obligation here, and beyond the grave, impunity and everlaſting ſleep.

Theſe are baits to catch the mean, the groſs, and the profligate. But their maſter art is that by which they frequently ſeduce the benevolent and the well-diſpoſed to embark as accomplices in the conſpiracy. No age is more expoſed to their ſubtle practices, than

* Hooker.

youth,

youth, which is the ſeaſon of virtuous feeling; and among our youths, none more than they, who unite in the ſame character, a fondneſs for philoſophical reſearch, with a judgment not yet rectified by ſtudy and the habit of reaſoning; a ſuſceptible, benevolent heart, with a fervent, ill-regulated imagination. Were the mirror of their minds ſufficiently enlarged, to preſent a whole-length view of that gigantic ſyſtem of tyranny which cruſhes the world, they would ſooner break up ſociety, and hide themſelves in ſolitude, than maintain it upon ſuch principles.

But the corrupters of innocence are deeply verſed in the wiles of rhetoric. The preachers of revolution never open their commiſſion bluntly; never prelude with the war-hoop of rebellion. No! The vigilance of the underſtanding muſt be lulled with ſofter accents. The natural rights of man wreſted from the iron hand of the oppreſſor! War and civil violence, with oppreſſive taxes and poverty in their rear, baniſhed from the face of the earth! Patriotiſm expanded into the pure, ethereal ſpirit of univerſal love! The bleſſings of Providence equally diſtributed among the

ſons

ſons of men! Reaſon acknowledged as the guide of human life! Faſcinating ſounds! Peace! Philanthropy! Equality! The rights of man! The age of reaſon! When theſe topics are ſeverally heightened by the richeſt colourings of eloquence, he who at firſt ſight is not touched with ſuch lovely images, is below the common level of our nature. But if our youth ſeriouſly miſtake theſe fair ſemblances, theſe beautiful pictures, theſe poetic fictions, for things real, ſubſtantial, practicable; if they ſuffer the ſound of their perſuaſive words, their melodious notes of fraternal love and zeal for the ſervice of man, and indignation at his wrongs, to ſteal into their hearts; from that hour, Farewel to Britain! Her race of glory is run. *On the day that ſhe ſhall eat of that fruit ſhe ſhall ſurely die.*

II. Secondly, I am to ſhew that the thing which the people imagine, is really vain; in other words, that the new philoſophy is falſe.

Diſtinctly to unfold, indeed, all its fallacies, would be to traverſe a boundleſs field. From the five leading principles, peace, philanthropy,

lanthropy, equality, the rights of man, the age of reaſon, I ſhall ſelect one, which I have never yet ſeen fully diſcuſſed, probably becauſe its evil tendency and connection with the general ſyſtem are not evident at firſt ſight, namely, Philanthropy; and I ſhall offer afterwards a few ſtrictures on Peace, and Equality, omitting altogether, as too extenſive for our preſent conſideration, the doctrines of the rights of man *, and the age of reaſon †. Firſt for Philanthropy.

That

* *Man did not enter ſociety to diminiſh, but to increaſe, the number of his natural rights.* This aſſertion, couched, to the beſt of my recollection, in theſe very words, is the foundation of the new doctrines about the Rights of Man. One is aſhamed to refute ſo pitiful a piece of ſophiſtry. Who ſo ignorant of the principles of civil government, as not to know, that man, when he quitted a ſtate of nature, renounced many of his natural rights? He renounced, for inſtance, the right of purſuing his own will in all things, uncontrouled by human laws. He renounced the right of executing juſtice with his own hands, when injured, on the perſon of the offender. He renounced the right of free commonage over the earth. Has he not then diminiſhed the number of his natural rights? He is amply recompenſed by the ſecurity of his perſon and property, which before were unſafe and unſecure.

† As Chriſtianity, upon the new ſyſtem, is folly, the age of reaſon ſtands oppoſed and contraſted, in the philoſophic vocabulary, to that of Chriſtianity.

Having

That paſſion which has ever been cheriſhed and cultivated by great legiſlators as the moſt generous and uſeful in the human breaſt, the love of our country, is expunged by theſe enlightened philoſophers from the catalogue of human virtues, as hoſtile to the general intereſts of humanity. Patriotiſm is, upon their ſyſtem, a narrow, local ſcheme of relations, invented by the policy of kings, to keep the dupes of their craft in ſervitude.

Having aboliſhed the Chriſtian Religion by law, what means will theſe fantaſtic legiſlators adopt in its ſtead, to regulate the diſorderly affections of our nature? Will they find a fit inſtrument in Deiſm or Natural Religion?

In the firſt place, none but men of argument and ſtudy are capable of underſtanding its principles. How are the unlearned to be kept honeſt? Do they think to tie up the hands of the ignorant thief in metaphyſical chains of argument, drawn from the immutable relations of juſtice?

But ſecondly, if it were poſſible to enforce the duties of life on the bulk of mankind, by means of Deiſm, they have neglected the proper means for that end. They have eſtabliſhed no national church for the conſervation of its principles, no particular order of men for the performance of its offices; without which it might eaſily be ſhewn, that Deiſm muſt ſoon degenerate into Atheiſm. Better were it for France, to conſecrate her cathedrals to Jupiter Ammon, and all the other refuſe gods of her Egypt; better offer up human ſacrifices to Moloch on the altar of Notre Dame, than become a nation of Atheiſts. The worſt religion, ſays a great Divine, is better than none.

Still

Still more ſo, upon the philanthropic principle, are all other more partial attachments;

" All the charities
" Of Father, Brother, Son."

Theſe vain fumes of the imagination, ſo apt to cloud the unphiloſophic mind, are not however to be deſtroyed. By ſome ſtrange proceſs of civic education, they are to be refined and exalted into general philanthropy.

It is to be remarked, that this doctrine is ever carefully inculcated in the firſt ſtage of political ſeduction. By deſtroying the beſt cement of the ſocial union, they evidently intend to looſen the frame of ſociety, and render it incapable of reſiſting the further inroads of their philoſophy, whether left to its own operation, or combined with phyſical force. If ſuch be the effect of this doctrine, let us examine the foundation on which it ſtands.

What is patriotiſm? Is it not the intereſt we feel for the country in which we have ſpent our days, for the ſcenes with which we

we have aſſociated all the pleaſing recollections of childhood and youth, in preference to thoſe countries, which we have never ſeen, or ſeen only after our moſt powerful aſſociations were formed? Is it not the intereſt we feel for a people among whom we have lived, whoſe manners and language are ſimilar to our own, in preference to other nations with whom we are little acquainted, and whoſe manners and language are different from our own? Is it not a ſenſe of obligation to a particular ſociety for benefits received; a gratitude, ſimilar in kind to that which we owe to our parents and benefactors, though more ſublime and heroic? If this be patriotiſm, if patriotiſm be in its nature a local and particular attachment, by what means ſhall we extend it univerſally to all countries and all perſons? Only by extending the faculties of our bodies and our minds. Until theſe be ſufficiently extended to make us acquainted with every country, and the manners of every country, with the private concerns and perſons of many individuals in thoſe countries, Philanthropy can never excite the livelier and warmer ſympathies of patriotiſm.

Nor

Nor until our powers of communicating good be equally extended, is it to be wiſhed that it could. Few have it in their power to do a ſervice to all mankind. A parent may benefit his children, a ſtateſman his country; but by what means can an individual benefit his whole ſpecies? Only by ſome great diſcovery. But ſuch diſcoveries, experience has taught us, are ſo rare, and ſo caſual, that few are ſanguine enough to be powerfully influenced by the hope of ſucceſs. General Philanthropy, therefore, can rarely prompt to any great exertion.

Beſides, the object of philanthropy is too unlimited, and the views of the philanthropiſt conſequently too indiſtinct, to become powerful principles of action; our attachments being always weak, in proportion as their objects are general.

Thus philanthropy being ſubſtituted in the place of more partial attachments, and the motives of the Philanthropiſt being weakened by two cauſes, the indiſtinctneſs of his views, and the improbability of accompliſhing them, what would be the effect? That every individual would bend all his endeavours

vours towards benefiting himſelf alone, and man become wholly ſelfiſh.

Man is a limited animal; and the numerous rivers, mountains, and ſeas, which interſect the habitable globe, tell us that he was deſigned to be a member of a limited ſociety. To regulate the immenſity of the univerſe, is the department, not of man, but of God.

Yet although the Author of our natures ſeems to have intended our native country for the peculiar object of our beneficence, he has by no means excluded from the ſyſtem of our affections, humanity to aliens and ſtrangers. That there is room in the human heart for the whole family of the ſocial virtues, for filial, conjugal, and parental love, for friendſhip, for patriotiſm, and at the ſame time for benevolence to all our fellow-creatures, we know and feel; and our own natural feelings are ſafer guides than French metaphyſics.

There are, however, artificial means for weakening, though not extinguiſhing, the love of our country. What thoſe are, is but too well known to the legiſlators of

France. The moſt powerful are to force a change of manners, and even language, to alter the names and colours of things, and ſo break the earlieſt aſſociations of ideas, deſtroy, as it were, a part of the mind itſelf, and then fill up the void with ſhows, and proceſſions, and ceremonies, and thoſe other allurements of the eye and ear. If any man meditate the overthrow of his country, let him carefully ſtudy the whole of this important chapter in the new Philoſophy.

Under this head, I ſhall only remark further, that they who for revolutionary purpoſes firſt conjured up this fallacy, were themſelves obliged to diſmiſs it, as ſoon as it had performed its appointed taſk. So completely was the public ſtrength withered by its malignant influence, that the people of that country for a long time ſeemed unable to reſiſt foreign attack; and it was only by reſuming the very principle they had abjured, by rekindling, not indeed a genuine love of their country, for that is ever rational, juſt, and regardful of the rights of others, but what ſerved their turn much better, that degenerate ſpurious patriotiſm, the ſpirit of national vainglory, that they were enabled to rouſe the military

military genius of the people. Thus is their doctrine belied by the ſucceſs of their arms.

The next of their chimerical projects, on which I am to offer a few ſtrictures, is that of perpetual peace. In the days of their promiſed millennium, the ſound of war ſhall be no more heard upon the earth, the very terms of the military art become obſolete among men. Yes. When ambition and avarice, and every other turbulent inmate of the human breaſt, when theſe the cauſes of war ſhall be extinct, then ſhall war alſo be extinct. But until that period ſhall arrive, although every revolution of the ſun be attended by a revolution of the ſtate, it is an eternal immutable law of our nature, that the political, as well as natural, body, ſhall be ſubject to periodical ravages, by the ſword, and by the peſtilence. As ſickneſs is to health, and nearly in the ſame proportion, ſo is war to peace; evils both, but evils inherent in humanity. To be diſſatisfied, therefore, with our political condition, becauſe it exempts us not from caſualties inſeparable from the nature of ſociety, what is it but to contend againſt truth and heaven?

It is by no means my deſign, to diſcourage any rational ſcheme for preventing the inceſſant waſte of life by human violence. Far am I from wiſhing to preclude the people of England from any real improvements in the art of civil government. I hope to ſee the day, when it may be ſafe to repair the gradual decays that time, or wilful waſte, may have committed on the walls of our conſtitution. But I dare not, with the fear of God before my eyes, lift an arm againſt that laſt refuge and nobleſt fortreſs of liberty, merely becauſe I hear the ſtorm of war beat againſt the battlements. The elevation of its ſite, and the maſſy grandeur of its turrets, may perhaps attract the thunder-cloud: but if you will have ſolidity, and height, and grandeur, you are, by the laws of nature, expoſed to theſe dangers.

This, like moſt of the new principles, is not only philoſophically falſe, but perfectly irreconcileable with the conduct of its authors. Theſe preachers of moderation and forbearance have contrived to crowd into the ſpace of a few years, more inſtances of national intolerance, inſolence, and tyranny, than are to be found during the ſame ſpace, in the annals

nals of kingly government. Witneſs their conduct towards America, Switzerland, Egypt, and our own country. Becauſe, forſooth, our ſtubborn Engliſh hearts are hardened againſt the Philoſophic Faith; becauſe we will not fall down and worſhip the gods of their new Pantheon, and offer up in ſolemn ſacrifice at the ſhrine of their deified philoſophers, our laws, and liberties, and conſtitution, civil and religious, which we have received from our forefathers, and which our children will claim at our hands, as their rightful, hereditary freehold; we are to be converted, if not by argument and reaſon, at leaſt by force of maſſacre and deſolation.

Hiſtory teaches us, that no form of government is more ſuſceptible of a ſpirit of tyranny, than the Democratic; and, if we may judge by the experience of a few years, the boaſted diſcovery in modern politics, the Repreſentative Democracy, far from an exception to the general rule, is of all others the moſt ferocious and ſanguinary.

The Deceivers and Oppreſſors of mankind not only violate, but in ſome inſtances ſeem to diſown their own principles. Individuals, who

who in their former low condition were the loudeſt in the cry of Equality, having riſen into place and power, and gotten by rapine what others poſſeſſed by law, have changed their principles with their fortunes, and renounced the doctrine of Equality. The word, indeed, ſtill rings in our ears; it ſtands conſpicuous as a formulary at the head of their edicts; it waves on their military banners in letters of gold. But the ſubſtance they have explained and quibbled away. By equality, they no longer mean equality; by a term general and abſolute, without reſervation or reſtriction, we are now to underſtand, forſooth, ſomething particular; ſome particular ſort of Equality, equal law, equal liberty, equal rights to unequal things, any thing or nothing, juſt as their able commentators on this ſide of the water ſupply them with ſophiſtries to juſtify their treacherous tergiverſations. Jugglers and Impoſtors! You have duped and fooled mankind by a ſtudied and fraudulent ambiguity! You govern the world by an equivoque! You have founded your republic on a lie!

Thus, if we may judge of their other principles from thoſe we have examined, whether

ther we appeal to reaſon, or the experience of modern philoſophers, modern philoſophy is alike *vain* and impracticable.

III. But ſuppoſe we are not warranted to draw this general concluſion from a partial view of the ſubject; ſuppoſe the great modern experiment to be not yet fully made; what have Britons to do with ſuch dangerous novelties? Is our political condition ſo deſperate, that the advantages of revolution are likely to outweigh the miſeries of civil diſturbance? If ſo, I know of no law of rational morality that enjoins longer obedience. I go farther. I aver that we are authorized by * God himſelf to overturn the government,

* I do not mean to ſay, that we are poſitively authorized by the written law. "We affirm, that as to the extent of our civil rights and obligations, Chriſtianity hath left us where ſhe found us; that ſhe hath neither altered, nor aſcertained it; that the New Teſtament contains not one paſſage, which fairly interpreted, affords either argument or objection applicable to any concluſions upon the ſubject that are deduced from the law and religion of nature." Paley's Philoſophy, Book vi. Chap. iv. where the ſubject is diſcuſſed at large.

"Men conſult Scripture, ſays Balguy, for what is not to be found in it; an accurate deſcription of their rights and duties: whereas the knowledge of theſe is ſuppoſed, not

vernment, and erect a better on its ruins. But are we ſure our condition is ſo deſperate?

not taught, by the ſacred writers. There was a time, when men were under the ſame deluſion with regard to their civil obligations: when both the origin and form of government, the extent of authority and degree of ſubjection, were determined not from the reaſons of things, or the laws of particular nations, but from the precedents and precepts contained in the Bible; a book never intended for ſuch purpoſe, and much injured by the artifice and violence with which it has been preſſed into a foreign ſervice." Balguy's Sermons, Diſcourſe vi.

The truth of the laſt remark is ſtrikingly confirmed by late experience. The French Clergy are ſaid to have inculcated the indefeaſible right of kings, and other political doctrines, as eſſential to Chriſtianity. They choſe to ſtake their religion on their politics. What is the conſequence? Thoſe doctrines are rooted out of France, and Chriſtianity with them. Men will ſooner believe that the Chriſtian Religion is falſe, than that it is unlawful to reſiſt oppreſſion.

It had been better for the tranquillity of Europe, that the abſtract queſtion of reſiſtance to the civil powers had for ever ſlept; ſince whenever that deſperate meaſure is juſtifiable, the neceſſity of the times muſt and will force the people upon it, whether the right be previouſly acknowledged by philoſophers or not. The misfortune is, that by harping for ever on the right of reſiſting Government under particular circumſtances, the people are prepared to reſiſt when not warranted by the circumſtances of the caſe. Fill their heads with Revolution, and Revolution will be the remedy for every ſlight diſorder in the body

rate? Enjoying, as the meaneſt of us do, the fulleſt and moſt compleat ſecurity for the

body politic, every petty abuſe of power, every imperfection inſeparable from human government. Juſt as the phyſician who has devoted an extraordinary proportion of his time to the ſtudy of ſome favourite medicine of acknowledged efficacy in extreme caſes, is apt to adminiſter it in all kinds of diſorders without diſtinction.

But as the doctrine of revolution is gone forth, and the miſchief done, it may be ſafer to admit, than to deny, what indeed ſeems to be philoſophically true, the right of reſiſting our civil Governors, then, and then only, when reſiſtance is conducive to the public happineſs. See Paley, Vol. II.

Upon this principle, thus limited, the people of England at this time have aſſuredly no ſuch right.

Upon the ſame principle, conſidering the corruptions of the French monarchy, with the probability, not to ſay moral certainty there ſeemed to be, although falſified by ſubſequent events, that the repreſentative wiſdom of a great nation would have been able to keep power out of bad hands, many true friends of religion and liberty thought a revolution in that country, not only allowable, but laudable. In human affairs, however, ſucceſs and miſcarriage are no true teſts of wiſdom and virtue. It is difficult to ſuppoſe any man wicked enough to have plunged that country into ſuch unexampled calamities, with his eyes open to the actual conſequences.

But while I maintain the lawfulneſs of reſiſtance in extreme caſes, God forbid I ſhould aſſert with the maniacs of France, that the people are inveſted with power to caſhier their

the protection of our lives, perſons, and properties; ſecurity, againſt the infliction of death, baniſhment, or other pains and penalties, except by the judgment of our peers, and due proceſs of law; ſecurity againſt arbitrary impriſonment, as far as is

their Governors, and abrogate their Government, *at their mere will and pleaſure*. With *power* do they ſay? Inſidious term! Power, it has been obſerved, means indifferently either phyſical ſtrength, or political right.

Theſe doubtful terms, and double meanings, if caſual, argue a woful want of preciſion for philoſophers; if wilful, diſcloſe the moſt criminal views.

That the people, in point of phyſical ſtrength, are competent to deſtroy, is undeniably true. But when preſſed, theſe gentlemen are forced to admit they mean political right.

Now as juſtice, upon every true theory of government, is inſeparably annexed to policy, every political, is alſo a moral, right.

So then the people are inveſted with a *moral* right to caſhier their governors, and abrogate their government, at their mere will and pleaſure.

The propoſition, as it now ſtands, is neither falſe nor wicked; it is only impenetrable nonſenſe; a contradiction in terms. Aſſerting the exiſtence of a moral right, it admits the exiſtence of moral duty, in civil affairs, right and duty being correlative terms. Again, aſſerting a right to act at *their mere will and pleaſure*, that is, independently of all conſiderations of duty, it diſowns the obligation it had juſt before acknowledged.

conſiſtent

conſiſtent with the public ſafety; ſecurity againſt inſult; ſecurity againſt ſlander and defamation; ſecurity againſt indigence, by our humane proviſion for the poor. For all which rights, our ſecurity is in the laws; and the laws are confirmed and aſſured to us by the freedom of the preſs; which, if they were endangered, would inſtantly ſpread the alarm, and rouſe in their defence all the ſpirit and virtue of the kingdom. Such is our protection, for the moſt part, againſt *regal* deſpotiſm. Is our condition ſo deſperate?

We have alſo conſtitutional barriers againſt the inroads of *popular* deſpotiſm; ſuch as, if the common-wealth were actually diſſolved, and the people met at this hour in ſolemn convention freely and deliberately to ſettle their future plan of government, they would probably think fit to reinſtitute. They would be adviſed, no doubt, by ignorant quacks and pretenders, and all who are enamoured with the beauty of their ideal ſyſtem, to reſerve the ſovereign power in their own collective body. But the people of England know themſelves and the nature of man. They know that

that in pure democracies the people are frequently inſtigated by envy, jealouſy, or rapaciouſneſs, to miſuſe their power, and tyrannize over thoſe who by their induſtry, talents or virtues, have riſen to opulence and diſtinction. Since therefore (would they ſay) we cannot depend upon our own juſtice and forbearance, the ſtability of the ſtate requires a ſecurity againſt our capricious imperious wills. We will therefore voluntarily ſubject ourſelves to a controuling power. We will have in our conſtitution a Parliamentary Houſe of Peers. We will hold them high in honour, if on no other account, yet on this, that the prejudices inſeparable from their order will counteract our own levelling, equalizing diſpoſition.

And, further, ſince bodies ſo heterogeneous tend mutually to repel and deſtroy each other, we will unite and hold them together by the chain of monarchical power.

Thus would the commons of England probably reaſon on the inſtitution of King and Lords, if left to themſelves and their own natural ſenſe, neither controuled by foreign

foreign influence, nor intimidated by the inſolence of factious clubs and ſocieties. Would they reaſon ill? Would this language prove them unacquainted with the nature and end of civil government?

This ſtrong democratic ſpirit, thus mitigated and diluted, is the life-blood of the Engliſh character, and individually, of that high, independent mind, which comprizes in itſelf all the ſeverer virtues. This high-mindedneſs, which cannot ſubmit to injury, which prefers danger to infamy, and honour to the conveniencies of life, is as uſeful, as it is ſplendid. It has taught us that national peace and ſafety are not to be purchaſed by ignominious conceſſions to a haughty domineering foe; and that for the counſels of a great nation to recede from the exactneſs of eſtabliſhed decorums and ceremonials, is only to pave the way for freſh diſgraces and freſh degradations. Theſe are the fruits of our political condition. Is it indeed ſo deſperate?

What, if the ſupreme power were veſted excluſively in King or Nobles, as in moſt of

of the nations on the continent? Would not that be worſe?

What if the ſovereignty of theſe realms were uſurped by the lower powers of the ſtate? If all the vice and faction of the country were organized into gangs of legiſlators, with the whole wealth of the kingdom at their command, burdening our property with fines, requiſitions, and confiſcations; breaking our proud ſpirits to the yoke by the rigours of long impriſonment, or delivering us over to military execution or judicial aſſaſſination, without confronting us with our accuſers, without form or colour of law? What, if in every diſtrict of the kingdom, all who are kept honeſt only by their own cowardice, and live in a ſtate of conſtant irritation againſt the wholeſome coercions of law, were let looſe upon good men, their natural enemies, to exerciſe private vengeance, under the maſk of public juſtice? What, if to compleat our miſeries, we had loſt the liberty of the preſs, and were denied the laſt conſolation of the wretched, the ſympathy of our fellow-ſufferers? Anſwer to your conſcience, every man that hears me. Is our's the worſt of

govern-

governments? Is the Britiſh conſtitution radically unfavourable to human happineſs? There is but one claſs of men, who are incompetent to form a juſt judgment on the caſe; thoſe who, in deep and difficult queſtions, want capacity or opportunity to think and judge for themſelves. Are there any ſuch among you? all ſuch are doomed by heaven to take their political opinions upon truſt, rather than reaſon. Do you preſume to juſtify apoſtacy and diſloyalty, by alledging the conviction of your conſciences? How came Ignorance by ſuch conviction? Have you thoroughly inveſtigated the nature of civil government? Have you, of all theories, diſentangled the moſt complicated? Of all ſciences *, fathomed the moſt profound? Have

* If there be any thing of abſtruſe or difficult in the ſtudy of politics, the ignorant can be no competent judges of our higheſt political controverſies. Hence it ſeems to follow, that a government founded on univerſal ſuffrage is founded on ignorance. Reduced to the dilemma, either of denying the premiſes, or of giving up their favourite principle, modern republicans have choſen the former. They have entrenched themſelves behind a propoſition, that is contradicted by the experience of all ages, and by the common ſenſe of mankind; that the art of civil government is eaſily intelligible to a plain underſtanding, without the aid of learning, without much profundity

Have you, during the inveſtigation, kept ſtrict watch over your minds, and preſerved that reaſon which God gave you to be the guide of life, free, firm, and erect, againſt the ſubtle artifices of ſophiſtry, and the ſtill more deluſive logic of your own paſſions? If you have done all this, and are convinced, nevertheleſs, that apoſtacy and diſloyalty are your bounden duty, it is well. Diſown your God. Forſake your king.

If you have not done all this, go, and aſk advice of thoſe whom common fame points out as the honeſteſt and wiſeſt of your neigh-

profundity of thought. A man of conſiderable talents among them peremptorily aſſerts, that no greater capacity is requiſite for governing a kingdom, than for managing the concerns of a private family. Similar ſentiments have been echoed and re-echoed from the gardens of Fernay to the groves of the Palais Royale, and thence through all the affiliated ſocieties of Europe. The ſame note has gently vibrated on the public ear from the walls of St. Stephen. Not ſo the venerable Hooker. "Eaſier a great deal is it for men by law to be taught what they ought to do, than inſtructed how to judge as they ſhould do of law: the one being a thing which belongeth generally unto all, the other ſuch as none but the wiſer and more judicious ſort can perform. Yea the wiſeſt are always touching this point, the readieſt to acknowledge that *ſoundly to judge of law is the weightieſt thing which any man can take upon him.*" Hooker's Eccleſiaſtical Pol. V. 1. p. 282. Oxford edit.

bours.

bours. And if you err in conſequence of their advice, you may reaſonably hope for pardon before the throne of mercy.

To deprecate ſuch infatuation from theſe happy iſlands, thouſands of our countrymen, at this ſame hour, are lifting up their hands with us to heaven, in one great act of national devotion, with prayers, and faſtings, and contritions.

And ſince God, in the ordinary courſe of his providence, governs the world by the operation of ſecond cauſes, rather than by the immediate interpoſition of his arm, and wills public virtue to be the inſtrument and meaſure of public proſperity; let us, as the only means of ſaving our country from deſtruction, cleanſe and purify our affections from every wild, every ſelfiſh paſſion; on the one hand, from the luſt of power or honours, from the venal exerciſe of our civil rights, from the * arrogance of rank or wealth, from

* I am far from confounding the ſeveral orders of ſociety. The diſtinction is founded in nature. Between him "*who gaineth wiſdom by opportunity of leiſure; and him that holdeth the plough, and glorieth in the goad; that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labours; and whoſe talk is of bullocks,*"

from all uncharitableneſs; on the other hand, from envy, from jealouſy, from the rage

bullocks," there can be little congeniality of ſentiment; becauſe their minds have few images in common for intercourſe of thought. Nor is it poſſible for the benevolent man, who has refined the natural ſenſibility of his temper by the artificial rules or habits of good-breeding, and is accuſtomed to regulate his behaviour by a delicate attention to the feelings of others, to be much pleaſed with the ſociety of the churl, who underſtands not, or ſets at nought, all the minor duties and decencies of ſocial life. Between the ignorant and the intelligent, the rude and the gentle, there is little room for that ſympathy which is the foundation of our perſonal attachments. Here then runs a line of demarcation, drawn by nature, throughout the whole extent of ſociety. Woe to the people who confound by their falſe politics things ſo diſtinct, and frame their civil polity on the ſuppoſition that no ſuch diſtinction exiſts. The only difficulty is, how to claſs particular men, or ſets of men.

In the early hiſtory of Europe, when ſociety ſettled into thoſe modes and habits of life which remain without much variation to the preſent day, no manual or mercantile occupation, carried on upon ſmall capital, with ſlender profit, left leiſure to thoſe employed in it, to poliſh their minds by the more liberal, or their manners by the more graceful accompliſhments. But the times are changed. The merchants and traders of this age, have, many of them, leiſure and opportunity, for reflection, and literature, and all thoſe elegant acquirements, which, when combined with virtue, entitle men to place and honour. Their titles, however, you diſpute. Their claims you reject. They are ſoured and diſguſted. I aſſert, not from theory, but obſervation,

as

rage of disappointed ambition, from an overweening confidence in our own wisdom, and an insolent contempt for that of others, from that treacherous, neutral indifference, which under the covert of moderation, extenuates the guilt of rebellion; from the result of all these, turbulence, disaffection, and the dangerous spirit of innovation; above all, from irreligion.

Let us remember, that without religion, we cannot possibly be free. To be

as far as my narrow sphere of observation reaches, that the political discontents of our merchants are founded, in great measure, on a just resentment of such arrogance. More perhaps have been jacobinized by the little galling aristocracies of private life, than by any public grievance whatever.

It should be recollected however by all such, that in civil affairs, resentment for personal injuries is not a more virtuous motive of conduct than regard to private profit. In either of these cases, the gratification of a selfish passion is preferred to the common good.

They should consider also, that these petulancies which result from the weakness of our nature, receive no countenance from public opinion, and will perhaps be found to exist in a small degree, when we consider the number of individuals lifted into distinction by birth or opulence, who cannot all be equally supposed under the guidance of reason or moderation.

free,

free, is to be ruled by law, not by will. But as law, without the religion of oaths, can give no protection, a people without religion cannot be ruled by law. They muſt be ruled, like ſlaves, by arbitrary power. They muſt be driven, like brute beaſts, by force and violence.

No nation upon earth had ever greater reaſon to be convinced of this, than our enemies. Happy will it be for them, if they profit by their experience, without protracting longer the dreadful experiment! A ſincere conviction of that one truth would enſure the downfal of the reigning philoſophy. May they learn from their misfortunes, that the great Social Good, the bleſſing which includes all other bleſſings, is Religion, acting upon Liberty, controlling her exceſſes, and awing her into moral order.

THE END.